

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.gov

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**BACKBONE STATE PARK CLOSED WHILE STORM DAMAGE IS
CLEARED**

STRAWBERRY POINT – Work crews are clearing debris from the roads at Backbone State Park from the storm Sunday night that dumped nearly seven inches of rain in three hours. The popular park in northeast Iowa a few miles south of Strawberry Point was evacuated Sunday ahead of the storm.

Jerry Reisinger, supervisor with the DNR's State Parks Bureau for northeast Iowa was touring the park on Tuesday and said the entire park will be closed for at least a week while workers clean up the damage. He said the electrical service has been restored and water is again available.

The whole north end of the park, including the east, west and north gates and trout streams are closed. Crews are using chainsaws and a pay-loader from the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) to work their way through the downed trees. "We have not been able to get through the north end," Reisinger said.

The nearly four miles of park roads wind through a mixture of steep banks and floodplains. The flash flooding overwhelmed the bridges and roads, taking out roads in places leaving holes three feet deep. Road sections near steep banks were covered with material and trees – some up to two feet in diameter – that had sloughed down the bank. The DOT will be sending crews to help with road and bridge inspection.

“Ninety percent of the damage is flood related, but there was some wind damage,” Reisinger said. The DNR’s AmeriCorps trails crew is on its way to assist clearing debris and other parks are sending dump trucks, wood chippers and other equipment from around the state.

Reisinger said other damage includes a blanket of silt between three and 18 inches deep covering the parking lots. The beach at Backbone Lake is also covered in silt and an estimated 50 picnic tables are missing, but believed to still be somewhere in the park.

Campers who have a cabin or campsite reservation and anyone with a reservation for a shelter in the park should call the park office at 563-924-2527 and leave a message. With all available park staff working to clear the debris, callers may not receive an immediate response. The park’s popular trout streams will not be accessible to anglers as well.

“The park won’t be in good shape for weeks to come, but once the park dries out and the debris cleared, we can get people back in to enjoy a picnic or something. But the park is going to be in rough shape this summer,” Reisinger said.

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HOLIDAY WEEKEND SLOWDOWN

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Cold, wet spring? Meet pent up demand. The two factors collided over Memorial Day weekend kickoff to the boating and camping season. Depending on where you backed into the water or pounded a tent stake, it was ‘win, lose or draw’.

“Very quiet today. Typically on a holiday weekend, we will have 300, 400 boats out here. Today, we maybe had 30,” estimated Department of Natural Resources conservation officer Aric Sloterdijk. We had just pulled out of Lake Delhi in Delaware County, after a couple hours on a cloudy, windy Saturday afternoon. “Weather has something to do with it. It’s not as warm as it usually is. I’m guessing, people here are about a month behind.”

Many of those potential boaters, though, were weekend construction crews. Heavy winter ice, with a spring of high water had twisted many of the docks into rubble. Terry Kimball was pounding new support posts into the river bottom and attaching new boards, where his old dock *had* been. “It was gone,” Kimball laughed. “We had a couple weekends in a row with high water. The second weekend, it just went down the river.”

Up and down the narrow impoundment of the Maquoketa River, docks and slips were twisted...or missing. We watched a couple in a pontoon spend the afternoon towing

their dock slowly upstream; battling the current from one direction and a strong wind from another. Other potential boaters decided to forego the onboard shorts and swimsuits, for sweatshirts and jackets, at picnic tables alongside the cabins. “Just too darned cold,” admitted Kathy Rowray, after her foursome returned from a quick tour of the lake. “There were more boats out there than I thought there would be, but they were just as crazy as we are, evidently.”

Of course, northwest of there, thoughts were on anything but summer recreation; after deadly tornados ripped through Black Hawk, Bremer, and into Clayton and Delaware Counties. There, DNR officers were too busy directing traffic and assisting with clean up to worry about holiday boaters.

Where there was no storm damage, there was some boating. At Mehaffey boat ramp, Monday, on the Coralville Reservoir, boaters were reminded of that as they backed down the ramp, alongside a light pole fifty feet out into the lake, rather than sitting high and dry, as is the case in normal water conditions. “It was busier Monday, but it still was not a typical Memorial Day,” noted DNR officer Shawn Meier. “It might have looked busy at the ramp, but it was the only (public) one open. With the weather, I think a lot of people found something else to do, rather than boating.”

And most of you who *were* out on the water, had those kids on board strapped into lifejackets. Anybody on board, under 13, has to have that PFD—personal flotation device—ON, while the craft is underway. And, for the most part, they did. “I was very impressed with the number of kids under 13 who were wearing them,” admitted Meier. “I expected to be talking with a lot of boaters about that this weekend. I think people are realizing that life jackets do save lives.”

Sloterdyk, too, saw near 100 percent compliance. We watched as one 12 year old slipped one on, after the fact. That boat operator escaped the ‘not wearing a lifejacket ticket,’ but did pick one up because he had only four jackets—all locked out or reach—for the five people on board.

When the boating season does arrive...and it’s going to be this weekend or next, officers were encouraged that the new law (going into effect May 10, at the moment Governor Culver signed the bill) is going to get some attention. With a couple exceptions, it applies for all situations when the boat is underway; that is, not anchored or moored to a dock or bank of a lake or stream.

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FALCON BANDING IN DAVENPORT

Young peregrine falcons will be banded at 11 a.m., May 29, at the MidAmerican Energy headquarters, 202 2nd Ave., in Davenport.

Mid American Energy has partnered with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources since falcons first nested in Davenport in 2002. There will be ample opportunity to see young falcons and learn about birds of prey.

This year there are 13 peregrine nesting sites around the state, including Lansing, Waukon Junction, MacGregor (new site this year), Clinton, I-80 bridge at Bettendorf, Davenport, I-280 bridge at Davenport, Louisa Generating Station, Great River Bridge at Burlington, Alliant Energy Plant at Chillicothe, Cedar Rapids, and two pairs in Des Moines. Last year 23 young falcons were produced at eight successful nestings from 12 nesting pairs.

There will be other banding dates as hatch dates are confirmed.

For details contact Pat Schlarbaum with DNR (515) 432-2823 or Joe Bannon (563) 333-8620.

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COLORING CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

DES MOINES - The winners the DNR coloring contest for children age 7 to 11 are: Dylan, of Thornburg, age 7; Bailey, of Greene, age 8; Derek, of Sumner, age 9, Corbin, of Whittemore, age 10; and Alexandria, of Des Moines, age 11. Each winner will receive a youth life jacket from Mustang Survival.

The coloring contest promotes the importance of wearing a life jacket while recreating on the water.

All of the coloring entries are posted on the DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov then click on Law Enforcement, then on Boater Education under the Law Enforcement Bureau Education Programs heading in the column on the left. Then click on Coloring Contest Winners Announced in the Quick Links on the right side of the page.

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